



Ken Vince (1940-2000) changed the face of employment for individuals with disabilities in Louisiana during his service as a rehabilitation counselor. Mark Thomas, a colleague of Ken's for many years, described him as a "fierce advocate" with "great integrity." Ken was a man committed to lifelong learning and was definitely not afraid to challenge the status quo. In speaking to people who knew him, it also became apparent that it would be difficult to fully capture Ken's genuine willingness to help others— outside of work, he was even known for helping interns with homework and car troubles.

Ken became a quadriplegic at the age of 16 as a result of a diving accident. In his later pursuit of a college degree he utilized the assistance of Louisiana Rehabilitative Services (LRS), where he later became employed

It was during this employ as a rehabilitation counselor and program manager that Ken began forming a new vision for vocational services in Louisiana: one of supported, rather than sheltered, employment. Sheltered employment environments are segregated in nature and known for paying less than minimum-wage; supported employment is focused on community-based employment with competitive wages. With his vision, Ken helped initiate the first supported employment pilot program in the state driven by his diligent data collection. He was a major catalyst for

Louisiana's receipt of the Supported Employment Systems Change Grant, which jumpstarted Louisiana's Supported Employment Network.

Continuing in the spirit of self-direction and community inclusion, Ken also spearheaded a program in the 1990s that assisted quadriplegics with independent living on college campuses. This program provided students with nurses and personal care assistants in the dorms, leading to greater independence while pursuing their education.

Then, in 1994, he participated in Operation People First¹, created by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. The purpose of the project was to bring "all of the American people, including people with disabilities, into the decision-making process of government and that of putting people first." There, Ken aided in identifying key issues in the disability community which later helped shape national public policy.

With his great integrity and commitment to serving others, Ken Vince undoubtedly left an impact that will be felt by generations to come.

¹ <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=sEO3Qwg4FfwC&hl=en&pg=GBS.PP4>